

ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive
JOSHUA LIPSMAN, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health
SUSAN TOLCHIN, Director of Communications

CONTACT: Caren Halbfinger

(914) 813-5013
(914) 813-5000 (After Hours)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2008

TRANS-FAT BAN ENFORCEMENT BEGINS

Starting Thursday, restaurants, cafes and school cafeterias that sauté or fry foods must do so in oils that do not contain trans-fats, or risk a citation and fine from the Westchester County Board of Health.

The ban became part of the county's Sanitary Code on Jan. 9, but the Westchester County Health Department provided a 90-day grace period through April 9. During this time, nearly 1,000 eateries were found to have made the switch to cooking with healthier oils that contain no trans-fats.

"Healthy eating is the cornerstone of a healthy life," said County Executive Andy Spano. "Avoiding trans-fats is just one way to eat smarter."

Natural vegetable oils such as olive, canola, peanut, corn, soybean, safflower and sunflower oils have no trans-fat and are high in unsaturated (good) fats.

Health Department inspectors now check for trans-fat oils whenever they inspect restaurants and other licensed food service establishments. Those still using trans-fat oils will be cited and can be fined up to \$1,000. All licensed food service operators were notified of the new code amendment in January.

"No one will miss trans-fats, and your body will thank you for not consuming them," said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health. "They are to food what leaded gasoline was to cars: unnecessary and harmful. Trans-fats contribute to coronary heart disease and stroke."

In April 2006, the Health Commissioner first wrote to restaurant owners inviting them to switch to monounsaturated and polyunsaturated cooking oils and be listed as part of the Be Fit Westchester program on the county's website. About 665 food establishments participated in this voluntary ban, out of 3,000. To increase participation, the Board of Health decided that a ban would be appropriate.

-30-

